

The

Hindu Marriage Ceremony

A Text for Student Priests



by

PANDIT RAMSARRAN SANKAR

THE HINDU MARRIAGE CEREMONY

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OM SHREE GANESH AYAH NAMAH

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by
PANDIT RAMSARRAN SANKAR

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Preface

Dear Readers,

Many of you may be aware that this is my second publication on our Hindu Rituals. The first publication 'A Basic Puja Manual for Student Priests' has been very successful since its launch in April, 1997. I have named this text "The Hindu Marriage Ceremony - A Text for Student Priests.' It is my first text on any of our Sanskaras, many of which are already regrettably lost while others through infrequent usage, face certain extinction. In modern times our Janeo, Vivah and Antyeshthi are still performed with great solemnity.

This text is merely a guide for students aspiring to the noble profession of the Priesthood, the latter of which is so important and necessary in our Hindu communities. I have again used English as far as possible being aware of the difficulties Sanskrit and Hindi present to our young budding priests of today.

My aim is, as it was always, the preservation of our Priesthood and the uniformity of our rituals, aims which I am aware would hardly ever be achieved unless there is in our community at large a sincere faith in the Priesthood resulting in the establishment of reputable institutions for the training of Hindu Priests.

The text does not dispense with the oral tradition by which our rituals have hitherto been handed down from the days of our ancestors. Tribute must, of necessity, be paid to those Purohits and Pandits of old who taught our grandfathers in the oral tradition. With increasing demands of modern life, however, oral traditional teaching must

give way to more accessible methods, especially in this modern technological age.

In the text I have tried to give the student a complete set of ceremonies relating to marriage i.e. The Variksha, Teelack, Pitri Shraadh, Haldi and finally the Marriage Ceremony proper. I must, however, stress that a sound knowledge of our Basic Puja is essential for the Vivah as it is for any other Sanskaar or ceremony.

At this stage my thanks to Bhai Ramlakhan Singh and family from Sunny Bank, London for their generosity in making this publication possible. Bhai Ramlakhan has an abiding faith in the rituals and traditions of his ancestors.

Grateful thanks to my brother-in-law Pt. Satyanand Sukul of Mississauga Canada for having read the draft and commented thereon.

May Mother Saraswati shower Her copious blessings on all aspirants to the priesthood. May all well-wishers receive Her choicest mercies.

Best wishes to you all

30th October 1997

Sincerely
Ramsarran Sankar
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London SW18 5DH
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FOREWORD

I was delighted to be asked to write the foreword for this text on the Hindu marriage ceremony prepared by Pandit Sankar.

Panditji has for over 23 years given continuous and dedicated service as a priest, to members of the Asian, Caribbean and Mauritian communities resident in Europe and North America.

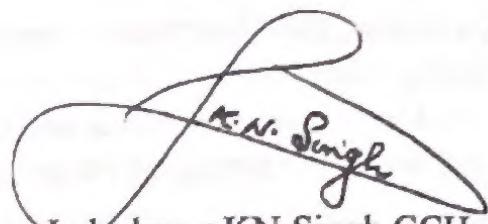
He has recently embarked on the task of writing manuals and texts pertaining to rituals and ceremonies of the Hindu faith primarily for aspirants to the priesthood. There is no gainsay and he is eminently qualified to do so and, may I add that his selfless service in this connection is to be commended.

It is evident even from a cursory glance of this text that great care has been taken to present a comprehensive account of all rituals relating to the Hindu marriage ceremony. The text begins with the rituals prior to the marriage rites proper, and thereafter flows smoothly into the main wedding ceremony. Such is the textual format that with a minimum of help from outside the text, one is able to follow and perform with ease the entirety of the rites and rituals relating to the Hindu marriage. This, no doubt, has been the author's aim and I have no doubt that this aim of his would be achieved.

A novel but welcome departure from the traditional texts on Hindu rituals is that English is freely used, explaining various aspects of the rituals. This would be of considerable assistance to members of our Caribbean communities in particular. The language of the priesthood, however, has always been Sanskrit and has been maintained, where necessary in the text.

Though prepared primarily for budding priests the text would be useful to all Hindus as well as non-Hindus. Its clarity in matters of detail relating to our marriage ceremony would be an education for all.

I urge everyone, therefore, to seek to be in possession of the text even if we might use it for mere reference. It would also be an invaluable guide for those following a course in comparative religion.



Laleshwar KN Singh CCH
Guyana High Commissioner
to the United Kingdom

AN APPRECIATION

The Hindu marriage ceremony; A textbook by Dharma Shiromani Pandit Ramsarran Sankar is an edifying text for young and aspiring purohits. Panditji has been doing yeoman service for the propagation of Hindu Dharma and Hindi language from his youth. In Guyana, the country of his birth, he was actively engaged in religious and cultural activities. He also conducted impressive services over the two radio stations.

After he qualified as an attorney in England, he returned to his native Guyana where he practiced his profession and rose to the position of a magistrate. Pandit Sankar has also written an inspiring, patriotic anthology of Hindi poems on Guyana and Dr Cheddi Jagan - a tribute towards his Motherland.

Back in England, Panditji has been a Senior Law Lecturer until his retirement in April 1997. He is involved in Hindu missionary work not only in the UK but also notably in Europe, Guyana, Canada and the United States. Panditji has found time to put his ideas in writing.

His efforts in edifying budding priests in this and his other works: *A basic pooja manual for student priests* must be commended. For Hindus, marriage is a holy institution created by God and must be solemnized with great sanctity and in conformity with the required ceremonial rites laid down in our Shastras. *Vivaha Sanskar*, or marriage ceremony, is the thirteenth of the important sacraments of Hinduism involving the reciprocal sacrifice of two persons of the opposite sex to live in harmony and mutual love. Both families are blessed by the priest at the marriage ceremony.

Panditji's effort to strengthen the priesthood with this new text is commendable. As a priest myself, I strongly commend *The Hindu Marriage Ceremony - A textbook for student priests* to all Hindu theological fraternities.

Pandit Ramlall, B.A., Dip. Ed.
Senior Spiritual Leader
Arya Spiritual Center
New York, USA

The Vivaha by Pt. Ramsarjan Sankar is the second of two books by him on Vedic Rituals; it is a small tribute to our indentured ancestors.

All proceeds derived from the sale of this book will go to charity.

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1. The Hindu Marriage: An Introduction

According to Hinduism there are sixteen (16) religious rites to be performed by every Hindu at turning points in his life. These are called Sanskaras. Marriage is one of these Sanskaras. Lord Manu, the Hindu law-giver, has mentioned eight (8) types of marriage which existed in his time, from divine to demoniacal. For man, however, marriage is a union with consent between man and woman for life religiously solemnised. It is the ceremony prior to the entry into the householder's life, the second of four stages in the life of a Hindu. The purpose of human birth according to us is for man to achieve self-realization and thus free himself from the shackles of birth and death. At every turning point in his life the Hindu strives for knowledge to equip him to attain this objective of self-realization. The material things of the world which are of paramount importance in some systems of philosophy offer no special attraction to the Hindu who merely uses them as a means of achieving the final goal of liberation of the human soul. Our visible human form traversing among our fellow men is not our true self but only a covering for the immortal, indestructible Atman hidden therein which if realized liberates man forever. This is the core of Hindu philosophy. Marriage itself according to Shri Sanatan Dharma aids in this pursuit of self-emancipation and is thus both important and necessary.

After his student's life in which he masters any branch of science, art or philosophy under the capable guidance of his teachers the Hindu enters into matrimonial life in which stage he begets children and carries out the

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multifarious and spiritual activities required of the Hindu householder. Having completed the householder's life he begins the life of an aspirant for higher knowledge toward self-realization. He dedicates his life to the upliftment of his fellowmen, checking his attachment to his worldly possessions and cultivating a spirit of renunciation. At the age of seventy-five (75) a Hindu completely gives up the material things of life save those as would secure the bare necessities of life. He becomes a complete servant of humanity and by practice of the Yoga of meditation he strives for Samadhi, the final stage of illumination where the self is liberated and he becomes free. It is called Moksha by the Hindu, Nirvana by the Buddhists and perhaps Salvation by Christians. It is a state of perfect peace and harmony with the Divine.

Marriage is a union which binds not only two hearts together but two families together and in Hinduism this union is especially sacred. For the strength to love, to obey, to discriminate and to understand humble supplications are made by the Hindu bride and groom at the time of marriage. A married couple living according to the dictates of Dharma, pooling their mental and physical resources together for success of the marriage union can achieve nothing but complete marital bliss.

2. Rituals Prior to the Marriage Ceremony Proper

There are at least three (3) important rituals prior to the marriage ceremony proper. These are :

- (a) The Variksha or engagement ceremony
- (b) The Teelack ceremony
- (c) The Haldi or Matkor Ceremony

There is a fourth (4th) ceremony called the Pitra Shraddha (blessings of ancestors) but this has fallen into desuetude and is carried out these days by orthodox Hindu families only.

Each of the above will be described in some detail in the text. It must be said from the inception however, that a knowledge of the Basic Puja is a pre-requisite for the performance of the above. Students are hereby referred to 'A Basic Puja Manual for Student Priests' a published text now available.

The student will be led step by step throughout each of the above rituals. He will be told about the significance, the ingredients required for each ritual and finally the details of each ceremony.

The student is urged to ensure that an auspicious day is chosen for each of these rituals after consulting the Panchang or seeking the advice of a Senior Pandit.

(A) Variksha

Significance :

This is the engagement of the groom by the bride's father or brother. It is the betrothal ceremony. Variksha means

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an outward expression of the desire of the groom-to-be for matrimony. It is also called Vagdaan. The groom-to-be has finally given his word, as it were, which brings peace and joy to the members of both families. It is a great milestone in the lives of both the bride-to-be and groom. It marks the assumption of matrimonial responsibilities.

Ingredients :

- (a) All puja ingredients to be prepared at the groom's home by the groom's parents.
- (b) The bride's father or brother should take with them Janeo, flower garlands, money, coconut, fruits especially dates, yellow coloured rice, chandan, dhoti and gold.
- (c) Before leaving for the groom's residence prayers should be done at the bride's residence with the above items placed in the lap of the bride. Prayers to Bhagvan Ganesh are appropriate.

Ritual :

Assuming the bride's father does the function then he, on an appropriate and auspicious day (which should be checked out) goes with a few male friends to the groom's residence. Both groom and bride's father would now sit for Puja—the groom facing East and the bride's father facing North. Simultaneous participation is essential. The order is as follows:

- (a) Basic Puja ritual conducted by the Priest except that the Sankalpa should end thus:
*स्वकीय विवाहांन् भूत वर रक्षा विषयक वाग् दान ग्रहण कर्मणि
निर्विघ्नार्थ ।*
*शुभतासिद्धयर्थ माङ्गल्यार्थ कलश गौरी गणेश नैग्रहादिनांच पूजनं
अहं करिष्ये ॥*
- (b) Father of bride then gives chandan and mala and

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- (c) does arti of groom. He also feeds him some dates.
- (c) Father of bride then takes up the other ingredients he has brought in a Thalee over which the Priest reads a sankalpa. This is then handed over to the groom who in accepting same should say "Swasti".
- (d) A short Hawan then Arti is done.
- (e) Visarjan, Panchamrit and Prashad
- (f) The groom rises, bows to his elders and leaves with his gifts
- (g) The priest is given a gift

N.B.

If the bride's or groom's father has not had their own janeo or other prior Sanskars done for any reason, then prior to the Betrothal ceremony Prayaschit Karm should be done in consultation and with directions of the family priest. The Vivah Sopang Vidhi provides for this ritual.

(B) Teelack

Significance :

This is placing of haldi paste teelack on the groom's forehead at a ceremony a week or two before the wedding. This ceremony has fallen into desuetude over the years since many consider it a repetition of the Variksha ceremony. The authorities, however, provide for this ceremony.

Ingredients :

These are basically the same as in the Variksha except that Haldi paste is taken.

Ritual :

As in the Variksha except that in

- (a) The basic Puja ritual the Sankalpa should end thus:

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अमुक गोत्रोत्पन्नया अमुकनन्या कन्यया सह स्वकीय विवाहाङ्ग
भूत पाणि ग्रहणार्थ वरण ग्रहण कर्मणि शुभता सिद्धयर्थ
मांडल्यार्थ कलश गौरी गणेश नौग्रहादिनांच पूजन आहं
करिष्ये ॥

(b) Haldi Teelack should be placed on forehead of groom in addition to Mala and Arti. Havan, Arti, Visarjan etc. are done as in Vaagdaan.

(C) Pitri Shraadha

In all auspicious ceremonies e.g. Yagnas, Janeo, Vivah, Pitri Shraadha is done. This is to remember our ancestors and seek their blessings prior to our ceremonies.

The family priest performs this ceremony with pindas and other ingredients. It usually takes place in the morning prior to the Haldi ceremony or on any appropriate day prior to the Haldi ceremony.

Students should always encourage their Yajmaans to perform this ceremony explaining carefully the significance thereof. Gita Reading normally follows the Shraadha proper. Havan and Arti are also done to complete the ceremony. Orthodox Hindu families would never do a wedding ceremony without the prior performance of shraadh. The older Purohits are well aware of this.

(D) Haldi Ceremony or Matkor

Significance :

This ceremony takes place at the residence of the bride and groom simultaneously. It consists of worship to Lord Ganesh whose symbols along with those of other deities are installed in the nuptial canopy and whose auspices and blessings are sought on this happy occasion. The departed ancestors are also remembered on this occasion and thus blessing sought for a fruitful and happy union. Clean clay is dug

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and brought in which a bamboo sprout is planted. The significance is that this union which will soon be cemented will grow and fructify. The bride and groom now anoint their bodies with a turmeric ointment which is useful for the human body and is regarded as auspicious in hindu rituals. From this day the bride and groom take steps to purify both mind and body in preparation for the great Vows to be taken by them on the wedding day. In a spirit of sacrifice and self denial they abstain from meat or drink, sleep on the floor and stay indoors for fear of possible contamination with outside.

INGREDIENTS

For Matkor (to be done in the evening)

- 1 tall bamboo with leaves on top
- 1 Harish made of wood - 3 to 4 ft. tall with seven cuts
- 1 Pot with earth and sand
- 4 small clay goblets
- 1 large decorated clay goblet (Kalash)
- coconut oil and haldi paste, Bahama grass (Doob)
- Pen knife, 5 pieces of yellow cloth with pieces of turmeric in them.
- 2 small benches, some soaked Urid dall, Sil/Lorha
- large cotton sheet, 9 small cooked puris, kohbar, foil
- sweetmeats, all puja ingredients

Ritual :

The ritual is elaborate but it is considered that the following order and content would meet the needs of our modern day society. The student should always endeavour to read the Vivah Sopang Vidhi and other authorities for further information. The order of the ritual is as follows :

1. Planting of Khambha

Assuming the ceremony is done at the bride's residence,

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the mother of the bride and other female friends would repair to a clean spot, dig some earth and return to the canopy. The bride's father, mother and bride sit together. The earth is taken and placed in the ground. After a short prayer to Ganesh, invocation to Bhumi Mata is done with white rice being thrown slowly on the ground. The Mantras are as follows for invocation : Washing of hands to be done before.

(a)ॐ भूरसि भूमिरस्य दितिरसि विश्वधाया विश्वस्य भुवनस्य धर्मी।
पृथिवीव्यच्छपृथिवन्हि॥हपृथिवीम्माहि॥सी।

(b)आगच्छ सर्वकल्याणि बसुधे लोक धारिणी उद्धतासि वराहेण
सशैलवनकानना।रत्नाकरेविष्णुना त्वं धृता वाराहरुपिणा आगच्छ वरदे
धात्री यज्ञेऽस्मिन् शुभदायिनी ॥

Then do five forms of worship—chandan, flower, dhoop, deep and naivaidya with Achman. Sprinkle mustard seeds on ground and thus do final prayers with flowers as follows:

क्षन्तव्यं चत्वया देवी सानुकूला मखे भव
निर्विघ्नं पर्म कर्मेदं यथा स्यात्वं तथा कुरु
भूतप्रेत पिशाचाद्या ह्यापक्रामन्तु राक्षसाः
स्थाना दस्मा द्वजन्त्वन्यत्स्वीकरेमि भुवं त्विमाम्
प्रेम से बोलो पृथिवी माता की जयः

Dig a hole in ground - wash bamboo and harish which is dyed in yellow. Dot both with sindoor and haldi. Place money, supari and rice in hole saying this Mantra:

गर्ताधिष्ठात्रि वासुकिने देवाय नमः

Then 5 or 7 men should plant both bamboo and Harish in the hole tying them firmly together with dyed yellow cloth.

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2. Placing of Wedding Kalash in ground

The decorated Mangal or Wedding Kalash should now be placed in the ground adjoining the Harish and bamboo. Some authorities think that 2 Kalash (one the wedding one and one for the Puja) should be used. This can be done since the Mantras are the same. Use the Mantras for Kalash sthapan (in the basic Puja ritual) i.e. Kalash, Ganesh, Gouri, Nawgraha Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh, Guru Puja. One piece of yellow cloth should be used to tie the neck of the Wedding Kalash. The other 3 pieces of yellow cloth should be used as follows: one for the bench, one for the left wrist of the bride and one for the water container used by the priest.

3. Silpohna

The sil/lorha (grinding block and stone) are used in this ceremony. The parents of the bride are covered with a white sheet and together they grind some soaked urd dall or channa to a paste. The cover is then removed. The sil/lorha are dotted with haldi/sindoor. They are then placed near to the Harish and left there until after the wedding. The ground paste is used in Matri Puja. One authority states that part of this paste should be cooked and shared out or used in Matri Puja.

4. Matri Puja

This Puja is essential on auspicious occasions like marriage. Prayers are offered to the 16 special female deities guarding various regions in the atmosphere. We ask them for their blessings and for removal of all evil influences in the atmosphere. The ritual is most complicated and baffles the most learned in our shastras. It is considered convenient for the student to proceed as follow:

- (a) *Invocation* : Place a few paan leaves on the ground and throw white rice slowly on them with these Mantras:

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गौरी पद्मा शची घेधा सावित्री विजया जया
देवसेना स्वधा स्वाहा मातरो लोक मातरः
धृतिपुष्टि स्तया तुष्टिरात्मनः
कुलदेवता गणेशानाथिका ह्रोता वृद्धौ
पूज्याश्तुर्दशः

ओं लक्ष्म्यै नमः लक्ष्मीं आवाह्यामि अत्र संस्थापयामि
ओं सरस्वत्यै नमः सरस्वतम् आवाह्यामि अत्र संस्थापयामि
ओं यमुनायै नमः यमुनाम् आवाह्यामि अत्र संस्थापयामि
ओं काल्यै नमः कालीम् आवाह्यामि अत्र संस्थापयामि
ओं कापाल्यै नमः कपालिनीम् आवाह्यामि अत्र संस्थापयामि
ओं रौद्र्यै नमः रौद्रीम् आवाह्यामि अत्र संस्थापयामि
ओं दुर्गायै नमः दुर्गाम् आवाह्यामि अत्र संस्थापयामि

(b) After these Mantras do 5 forms of worships as follows: Chandan, Flowers, Dhoop, Deep and Naiwaidya (consisting of 9 pair puris with lapsee). If the cooked urid dall paste is available this can be given here as Naiwadya also.

(c) Final prayers as follows:

कुवन्तु मातरस्सर्वा गौर्याद्या मम मंडलम्
लक्ष्मीं तन्वन्तु मद्देहे शुभकार्याणि सर्वदा
प्रेम से बोलो गौरी आदि माता की जय।

5. Deva Pitri Nimantran

This is a special invocation to the Devas and Pitrис to shower their blessings on the marriage proceedings. Blessings of our departed ancestors especially are necessary on these occasions. White rice and four (4) small goblets are used. Two are used for the Devas and two for the Pitrис. The parents should now pour very slowly white rice in the first two goblets while the Priest chants as follows: In Goblet 1.

स्वकुलदेवेभ्यो नमः स्वकुलदेवात्रिमन्त्रयामि अत्र संस्थापयामि
स्वेष्ट देवेभ्यो नमः स्वेष्ट देवान् त्रिमन्त्रयामि अत्र संस्थापयामि

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स्ववास्तुदेवेभ्यो नमः स्ववास्तुदेवान् त्रिमन्त्रयामि अत्र संस्थापयामि
 स्वग्राम देवेभ्यो नमः स्वग्राम देवान् त्रिमन्त्रयामि अत्र संस्थापयामि
 स्वक्षेत्र देवेभ्यो नमः स्वक्षेत्रदेवान् त्रिमन्त्रयामि अत्र संस्थापयामि

In Goblet 2 :

सर्वेभ्यो गणपत्यादि पंचलोकपाल इन्द्रादि दशोदिग्पाल
 इकादश रुद्राष्ट वसूभ्यो नमः सर्वानेतान् गणपत्यादि
 पंचलोकपालादिकान् निमन्त्रयामि अत्र संस्थापयामि:

For the pitras they are treated as devas here. Pour white rice in the 3rd Goblet as priest chants:

ॐ पैतृकविवश्वेभ्यो देवेभ्यो नमः
 पैतृकविवश्वान् देवान् निमन्त्रयामि अत्र स्थापयामि
 प्रपितामह प्रपितामहेभ्यो नमः पितृ पितामह
 प्रपितामहान् निमन्त्रयामि अत्र स्थापयामि:
 ॐ मातृ पितामहि प्रपितामहीभ्यो नमः मातृ पितामही
 प्रपितामहीः निमन्त्रयामि अत्र स्थापयामि:
 ॐ मद्दस्ताधिकारिभ्य समस्त पितृभ्यो नमः
 मद्दस्ताधिकारिण समस्त पितृनिमन्त्रयामि
 अत्र संस्थापयामि:

In 4th Goblet pour rice and any puris left over from Matri Puja:

ॐ भाण्डत्रयाभ्यन्तर स्थितेभ्यः सर्वेभ्यो
 निमन्त्रितेभ्य सुपूजितेभ्य स्वकुलदेवतादिभ्यो नमः
 एवम् मिष्ठान्नादिबलीं समर्पयामि:
 भो स्वकुल देवतादयो यूयं यथाभागममुं बलिं गृह्णति

Clasp hands and offer prayers

देवदानव गन्धर्वा यक्षराक्षस पन्नगाः
 ऋषयो मुनयो गावो देवमातर एव च
 शरणागतोस्म्यहं तेषां सर्वे तं मम सुप्रदाः
 बलीदानेन संतुष्टाः प्रयच्छन्तु ममेपितम्

RITUALS PRIOR TO MARRIAGE CEREMONY PROPER

सर्वकार्याणि कुवर्नु दोषांश्च धन्तु मे सदा
सर्वे वैवाहिके रक्षां प्रकुर्वन्तु मुदान्विताः

6. Nandi Mukh Shraadh

There are special prayers to the departed ancestors. Place four (4) paan leaves on the ground in front of the Bedi. Then do the sankalpa with paan, supari, money, water, ending thus:

अमुक नाम पुत्रस्य या कन्यया वाश्वः
अद्यवा कतर्व्य विवाहस्त्वेन साङ्कल्पिकेन
विधिना नान्दी श्राद्ध महं करिष्ये:

Then pour water, perfume, rice, money, food and water with these Mantras:

ॐ भूर्भुवस्यः इदं वः पाद्यं पादावनेजनं
पादप्रक्षालनं वृद्धिः मातृपितृ एवम् सर्वपितृभ्यो
नान्दीमुखाः आसन, गन्ध, द्रव्य, अक्षतान् समर्पयामि:

Final prayers with flowers to the pitris with these slokas:

माता पितामही चैव तथैव प्रपितामहीः
पिता पितामहश्चैव तथैव प्रपितामहः
माता महस्तत्पिता च प्रमाता महकादयः
एते भवन्तु सुप्रिताः प्रयच्छन्तु च मंगलम्॥

Finally cover the four goblets with foil and place near the Kalash. Open the covers on the wedding day.

6. Havan

A short havan should now take place after which the priest with grass should rub the haldi on the bride after which 3, 5 or 7 young girls should rub the dye on. Before the wedding day dye should be put on for 7, 3 or 5 times.

N.B. There is no visarjan at this ceremony.

Final arti and prashad should be shared.